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THESIS

A PSYCHOLOGICAL STUDY OF TOLSTOY

Submitted by

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(A. B., Smith College, 1924)

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INTRODUCTION

A STATEMENT

The aim of psychology, as of every other science, is to know the truth. Psychology concerns itself with finding out the truths of human nature which, until comparatively recently, has been neglected as a field for scientific study. In the past the human individual was estimated in terms of his moral character, and judged by his actions. Moral and emotional prejudice has long stood in the way of an adequate understanding of the complex factors which make up the human personality. It is the effort of modern psychology to understand the motives which impel a man to action, to know why he acts in the good, bad, or peculiar way in which he does. Since there is a fundamental unity as well as individual differences in human nature, it is not unreasonable to suppose that a study of the personality of some, will throw light on the problems of others.

One way of acquiring such knowledge is through a study of the lives of great men, who have left behind them fuller records of themselves than ordinary people — in the shape of letters, memoirs, biographies, and, in the case of authors, their own writings. A study of this sort has the twofold purpose of enabling one to appreciate better the achievments of the man, in the light of their relationship to his personality, and to clarify our own motives and those of others with whom we may come in contact.

It is in such a way that I wish to study the personality of Leo N. Tolstoy and to find wherein his ultimate philosophy was the logical expression of that personality, and to determine, if possible, the factors which made him what he was.

The life of Tolstoy has been a riddle to the world in general and there are few great men about whom more opposite opinions have been entertained. He has been revered as a saint, and dismissed as a savage,

and always there has been the puzzle of his conduct to solve. Why should a man at the height of his career, having health, wealth, achievement and appreciation — why should such a man pass through a period of despair and severe mental conflict, and finally attain salvation only by denying all that had hitherto made life useful and pleasant both for himself and others?

It has been the popular idea that Tolstoy's life was split in two at middle age, the latter half having no real relation to the first. But a closer investigation reveals the fact that all the elements of conflict in Tolstoy's nature existed in a precocious form at an early age, and that there were many minor crises and battles, which were but preludes to the great conflict of his middle age. It is the aim of this study to show how his final mode of life and his philosophy were the response to his inner needs and instead of severing the continuity of his life, served rather to establish it.

In order to understand him as completely as possible, I shall describe his background, his race and country, his family and his physical environment. Next I shall consider an analysis of his inner emotional life, and of the outward facts as they bear upon the inner development. To this end I have studied biographies, reminiscences, and critical estimates of Tolstoy, together with psychological and psycho-analytic interpretations of his life and works. And since knowledge of an individual cannot be gained only by knowing the opinion of others I have endeavored to find out what Tolstoy said for himself in his Confession, Journal, Recollections and Letters. Tolstoy's self revelation, however, was not confined to frankly autobiographical writings but in all his novels he presented the type of himself, and portrayed through the medium of his heroes different phases of himself

and different stages in his own development; and I have taken material for this study from his novels as well as from his other writings.(1)

There can be no cut and dried conclusion to the study of a human being, and in the last analysis there may be much which will escape us, but it shall be my attempt to make the apparent riddle and contradictions of his life understandable in view of what he was as a man.

1. It is generally agreed that Tolstoy's writings are autobiographical. See:

N. H. Dole: "Life of Count Leo N. Tolstoy".
H. L. Fausset: "Tolstoy, The Inner Drama".
H. Freimark: "Tolstoy als Charakter".

BACKGROUND

Tolstoy lived during a period of chaos and unrest in Russian history. During the reign of Alexander II, serfdom was abolished, and the land redistributed. The face of the country was transformed by this upheaval in the condition of the people, and in the transition period which followed, the inconveniences were more emphasized in the minds of the people, than the advantages, and in point of fact, there was much poverty and suffering. The lack of proportion between revenue and tax brought the small cultivator back into dependence upon the great proprietor, and serfage re-appeared in disguise. The administrative reforms which had been instituted at that time, made scarcely any impression upon the people.

The dissatisfaction of the peasantry manifested itself in a desire for higher spiritual development, as evidenced by the formation of schisms and the making of pilgrimages. Indeed, it has usually been among the common people in Russia that great religious interest has been shown, and in order to express this religion, they will either be satisfied with the Orthodox Church, or be dissatisfied and join or found a sect.[1] The mass of the people has been always very religious, but the educated middle class, and the aristocracy have been usually either indifferent or atheistic. It is therefore, perhaps the more surprising that Count Tolstoy, rich and aristocratic, should have become the apostle of a peasant's religion.

The development of culture in Russia at that time was very high. Her music and literature were universal, and it will suffice to mention such names as Tolstoy, Turgenev, Chaikowski, Rimski Korsakoff, Mendelev and Palov, to demonstrate the significance of Russian culture during the nineteenth century.

1. No statement regarding Russia or Russian institutions applies necessarily to the Russia of today.

The family of Tolstoy was one which had been eminent in war, diplomacy, art and literature for two hundred years, among them a well known minister and friend of Peter the Great; and Tolstoy's mother was the daughter of a general in Catherine's time. We must also remember that Tolstoy was a Russian belonging to that people whose national character has always shown a strange medley of contradictory elements. A certain plasticity, the hall-mark of the Slav races, combined with a [illegible] realism and practical spirit, results in their extravagance, adaptability, patience, lack of balance, laxity and fear of responsibility. The Russian temperament is full of extremes, and one has the feeling that a Russian might be almost anything except mediocre.

A glance at the physical environment shows a very pleasant country estate, Yassnaya Polyana - or Bright Glade, where the young Leo lived with three older brothers, a younger sister, father, grandmother and adopted aunt. The children's mother had died when Leo was two years old, and her place was taken by "Aunty Tatiana", a distant cousin of their father's who lived on the estate and looked after the children when their own mother had died. Of the influences surrounding him in his early childhood, none was more important than "Aunty Tatiana". It was she, he tells us, who taught him the spiritual delight of love, not by words, but by her whole being, and secondly she taught him the delight of an unhurried quiet life, both of which ideals he was to seek all his life. Another important influence which his environment offered him was in the persons of the many half-crazy saints, the "holy fools", who swarmed Russia at that time. These, on their various pilgrimages would be given a night's lodging at Yassnaya Polyana, and in them did Leo have the ideal of self-abnegation, and self-humiliation as ends in themselves presented to him. Since his final philosophy was

one of renunciation, it is interesting to remember this early pattern of behaviour. The wide gap between the practice and the professions of Orthodox Christians was early observed by the boy and he could not fail to note the contrast between those who practiced what they preached and those who did not.

The occupations of the children were the normal ones of all children situated as they were. There were horses, dogs, hunting and games, lessons and visitors. When Leo was eight, the family moved to Moscow, where a better education could be procured for the children than was possible in the country, and it was when they had been there a year that their father died suddenly when on a business trip to another city. Such was the outer aspect of Tolstoy's childhood.

The analysis of personality involves the question of how far the individual is a product of his heredity, and how far he has been modified by environment. How far is his reaction to the experiences of life predetermined by the constitution of his nervous system? This is a question difficult to answer, and of course it is impossible to explain personality exclusively in terms of either the one or the other; certainly one cannot understand Tolstoy without knowing something of the nervous equipment with which he started life.

He belonged to the extreme hyper-sensitive type, and in a situation which in the average individual would arouse only a mild response, his nervous reaction would be so exaggerated as to appear abnormal.

Tolstoy was by no means unique in the possession of a highly sensitized nervous constitution. Studies of other men of genius reveal an exaggeration of the sensibility which results in melancholy and hypochondria.

In his "Psycopathic Study of Edgar Allan Poe", Dr. Robertson points out that Poe suffered from a morbid pre-disposition which sooner or later would have overwhelmed him, and quotes a letter of Poe in which he wrote of "suffering under a depression of spirits . . . . miserable in spite of improvement in circumstances. I am wretched and know not why."[1] He goes on to say that these cries of agony are not unusual in men of genius, and an intimate study of their lives shows that many of them suffered from periodical depression and various mental obsessions which sometimes amounted to absolute disease.

Shelley described his abnormal sensations as follows:[2]

"My feelings at intervals are of a deadly and torpid kind, or

1. J. Robertson: "Edgar A. Poe. A Psycopathic Study," pp 27 et seq.
2. Ibid.

awakened to a degree of unnatural and keep excitement . . . . towards evening I sink into a state of lethargy and inanimation, and often remain for hours on the sofa.between sleep and waking, a prey to the most painful irritability of thought. Such, with little intermission is my condition."

Hennequin writes:

"L'existence d'organisations mentales particulieres individuelles, bien caracterisées comme ou pouvait attendre d'en trouver chez des hommes remarquables, c'est-a' dire de passant par quelque, endroit ce qui est considere comme le type normal humaine . . . . . l'homme superieur, l'artiste, est constitue d'une facon speciale a la fois maladive et admirable dans son intelligence,sa sensibilite . . . Tout l'appareil sensoriel est exacerbe et surtendu."[1]

It is this which is the essence of the artistic genius, and this same sensitiveness which registers ordinary thing , like a perfume, or a call of a bird so intensely as to show lights and shades of feelings and associations, which are imperceptible to the average person, this causes the sufferings of the artist himself, for even pleasant sensations are transformed into painful ones through this delicate mechanism, and we all are familiar with things in themselves beautiful or happy. being described by poets in terms of melencholy.

James included the temperament of men of genius among those whom he designated as the "sick souls', those who cannot take life cheerfully as it comes, but who must bear the weight of the consciousness of dark depths and who are congenitally fated to suffer from its presence[2]. Such a state of morbid susceptibility, he says, is seldom

2. W. James: "Varieties of Religious Experience.
1. E. Hennequin: "Ecrivains Francises.," p 261.

2 (cont.) "Unusual men, as one would expect, are characterized by the possession of a special kind of mental constitution; that is to say, their sensibility passes beyond the point which is considered normal------the superior man, the artist, is constituted in a particular fashon, which is both unfortunate and admirable. The whole sensory apparatus is stretched to the utmost limit."

found where the nervous constitution is perfectly normal.

The Tolstoy who wrote of his melancholia and sufferings of spirit in "My Confession", as a man of fifty, is familiar to us in this aspect. But in the child Tolstoy was the same highly sensitized nervous system, and he is described as being an emotional, susceptible child, so easily moved to tears, by either joy or grief that he was nicknamed by his brothers, "the weeping Leo."[1]

The first chapter of his novel "Childhood", in which he described the first ten years of his life, substantiates the picture of the youn Leo as an unstable and emotional child. In this chapter he told of how one morning as he was lying half asleep, the tutor who took care of the children wakened him by striking at a fly over his head, and of how he felt that the tutor did this on purpose to torment him, and accordingly, filled with self-pity, he thought hard thoughts, full of hatred for the tutor. And then, his nerves upset, when Karl Ivanovitch playfully tickled him, he wanted to laugh and cry, and, repenting of his harsh thoughts when he reflected how good and kind Karl Ivanovitch really was, he burst into tears, and when asked why he wept, he did not like to tell the real reason, so said that he had dreamed his mother was dead; and full of grief, both because he had thought unkindly of this good man, and vecause he imagined so vividly

1. A. Nazaroff: "Tolstoy. The Inconstant Genius," p.2.

the fictitious dream that he convinced himself it was true, his tears flowed more and more copiously. And so real was this dream to him that later, when questioned about it, he could hardly restrain his tears.

Thus early do we see evidence of his imagination so vivid that he actually experienced as true, the fictions of his mind and it was this power of artistic creation which was to make him one of the greatest novelists of his day.

As we should expect from a child of his super-sensitiveness, none of his adjustments to new situations were made easily. Everything made too powerful an effect upon him to be lightly cast off. And each transition period was marked by a sense of something lost, of a joyous innocence and happiness goneforever as the demands of life laid new restrictions and new fetters on him. When he was only five he experienced this sense of separation from Nature when he was sent down from the nursery to live with the other boys, and to be under the care of the tutor instead of his "Aunty Tatiana". He tells us how sad he felt that he would never again be put to bed by her, - how life could never again be quite the same, and conscious of his powerlessness to change the order of things willed by his father and grandmother, he screamed and cried in futile protest. He experienced "for the first time and therefore more strongly than ever since . . . . the consciousness of the cross every man is called upon to bear."[1]

The sense of sin which haunted his maturity began as a child in the feeling of separation from the free innocence of Nature, and since this division in his nature was so fundamental that it appeared in earliest childhood it is perhaps not strange that he should never

1. L. Tolstoy: "First Recollections," P 7.

have succeeded in harmonizing the two elements.

It was also at the age of five that his older brother, Nicholas, announced to the children that he had discovered a secret which would make all men happy, which he had written on a green stick.

"There would be no more disease, no trouble, no one would be angry with anybody, all would love one another, all would become Ant-Brothers . . . .the Ant-Brotherhood was revealed to us, but not the chief secret".[1] The little Leo was tremendously excited by this news, his face shone, his eyes filled with tears, and he felt that the most wonderful thing in the world had come to pass. And it was this green stick which he spent his life in searching for, but although there were other people who seemed to possess the secret of happiness for themselves, he was never wholly to discover it.

This preoccupation with the meaning of life became involved at an early age with the meaning of death. One of the most vital and far-reaching experiences of his childhood was his early knowledge of death. When a child of nine he was taken to see his grandmother as she lay dying, and never was he to forget the horror he felt at her swollen and unrecognizable appearance. And when she had died, and the heavy atmosphere of death lay over the house, he realized for the first time that life was also death and that one day he, too, should die. The description in "Childhood" of his mother's death may be a mingling of the facts connected with his grandmother's death as well as actual memory - since his mother had died when Leo was two. However that may be, it is important in showing the feelings connected with his first knowledge of death.

"I stood on a chair in order to see her face . . . .I shuddered from terror when I convinced myself that it was she. But why were

1. H. Fausset : "Tolstoy, The Inner Drama," p. 32.

her closed eyes so sunken? Why this terrible pallor, and the black spot under the transparent skin on one of her cheeks? . . . . I forgot that the dead body was she . . . . I imagined her alive, merry, smiling; then I recalled the terrible reality . . . . and again dreams took the place of reality . . . . then the consciousness of reality disappeared, and I completely forgot myself . . . . I know only that I lost for some time the consciousness of my whole existence and I experienced some elevated inexpressibly pleasant and sad sensation."[1] At the funeral he described again the association of terror with death, when, the mass over, all present went up to make their obeisance, and the little child of a peasant woman screamed with fear at the sight of the dead woman.

"I was struck by a terrible penetrating cry, which was filled with such terror that if I were to live a hundred years, I shall not forget it, and whenever I think of it, a cold chill passes over my body. I raised my head: . . .near the coffin stood the same peasant woman, with difficulty restraining the girl in her arms, who fought with her little hands, and, throwing back her terrified face and fixing her bulging eyes upon the countenance of the dead woman, shrieked in a terrible preternatural voice. I cried out in a voice which, I think, was even more terrible than that which had struck me, and ran out of the room. Only then I understood what the strong and heavy odor came from, which filled the room, mingling with the odour of incense; and the thought that the face which only a few days before was beaming with beauty and gentleness, the face of her I loved more than anything in the world, could evoke terror, for the first time, it seemed, opened the bitter truth to me and filled my soul with despair."[2]

This early identification of death and physical life was one of the most fundamental of all his life's experiences, and it was this which prevented him from forming a spiritual conception which might have saved him from the torment he went through later in life, at the thought of approaching death.

1. L. Tolstoy: "Childhood", p.124
2. Ibid. p. 125.

The psychology of Freud lays greatest stress on the relationship of parent and child. Family constellations abound in Tolstoy's childhood, and the application of the Freudian point of view may be worth while in throwing additional light on his personality.

To the child, the father stands much the same as God, for it is only through the analogy of fatherhood that the child attains to the abstract conception of God. This, as readily can be seen, has many unfortunate results. The questions and doubts which arise in the mind of the child regarding the father when he shows himself to be an ordinary human being after all, cannot fail to have far reaching effects in the child's attitude towards the rest of the world, since it is only natural for him to view life in the light by which he first saw it in his own home.

Tolstoy tells us of the particular awe and reverence he felt for his father as if he were a being remote and apart from every-day life. And yet there were the inevitable doubts about this divinity. At a ball in Moscow, the little boy makes a spectacle of himself by his antics in trying to dance when asked by a princess to dance the mazurka, which he does not know. His father angrily tells him not to dance if he doesn't know how, and pushes him aside - and the child in an agony of embarrassment at having been the center of every one's attention, thinks to himself that everyone hates him, and his father, too.

"Why did Papa blush and seize my hand? Is it possible that he, too, was ashamed of me? Oh, that is terrible! I am sure if Mamma had been here, she would not have blushed for her Nikolenka!"[1]

1. L. Tolstoy: "Childhood," p.101

And later he wrote of how he noticed his father's attentions to the chambermaid,[1] - and says:

"I loved my father, but a man's mind lives independently of his heart and frequently harbors incomprehensible and cruel thoughts. Such thoughts came to me though I endeavored to remove them."[2.]

In discussing this conflict of feelings which a child may have about his father, Dr. Theodore Reik says:

"Die Psychoanalyse hat aufdeckt das diese Zweifel ins Unbewusste verdrängt werden und verstärkt durch den sexuellen Neid des Kindes gegen den Vater, oft zum Skeptizismus zum nachtträglichen Trotz führen, und in allen Neurosen als wichtiger Bestandteil aufzuzeigen sind."[3.]

That Tolstoy's feeling for his father was just such a mixture of reverence, doubt, love and hate may be shown by an analysis of one of his day dreams which he recounts in "Childhood."[4.]

The situation leading up to the phantasy was as follows:

Karl Ivanovich, the old and beloved tutor, had been dismissed as being too old to remain in his position and his place was taken by a young Frenchman, St. Jerome (these are the fictitious names used in "Childhood"). Leo, repelled by his formal manner, and because he resented anyone's taking the place of Karl Ivanovich, adopted such an attitude of hatred and disobedience, that on one occasion he was threatened with punishment, and when blows and

1. L. Tolstoy: "Boyhood", p.232
2. Ibid.
3. T. Reik. "Von der Kinderseele.", in Imago 1913. p.90
"Psycho-analysis has revealed that this doubt which is pushed down into the unconscious, and intensified by a sexual jealousy on the part of the child for the father, leads often to religious doubt, skepticism and disdain, which are shown to be the most important element of all neuroses.
4. Ibid pp. 92-3 .

defiance were his only responses, he was shut up by himself in a room where he lay thinking that everyone hated him and all were against him and that the reason for this probably was that he was an adopted child.

"It must be I am not the son of my mother and my father, ... but some unfortunate orphan, a foundling, picked up for charity's sake" I said to myself, and that absurd idea not only afforded me some sad consolation, but appeared quite probable to me."[1] Then pursuing this train of thought, he imagines himself leaving his home, and going to war, distinguishes himself by great valor, and wounded, is hailed by all as the country's savior, and, becoming a general is greeted by the Czar who says, "I thank you. I shall do anything you may ask of me." And he replies "....I ask only this: permit me to destroy my enemy, the foreigner, St. Jerome. I want to destroy my enemy, St. Jerome."[2]

Then, thinking of God, he asked Him what he had done to deserve this punishment, and the thought of an unjust Providence gave him a further melancholy satisfaction. Then imagining that he would surely die, he pictured to himself the grief of his family and how St. Jerome was ordered out of the house, as having frightened Leo to death."

"After forty days, my soul would fly away to heaven. There I see something wonderfully beautiful, white, transparent, and long, and I feel it is my mother! The white form surrounds and pets me.

'If it is really you,' I say,

'Show yourself better, that I may be able to embrace you.'"

'We are all like this here, I cannot embrace you any better. Are you

1. L. Tolstoy.: "Childhood.," p.201
2. Ibid, p. 202.
3. [illegible]

not happy as it is?' 'Yes, I am very happy, but you cannot tickle me, and I cannot kiss your hands.' 'There is no need of it, it is nice here without it,' she says, and I feel that it is nice indeed, and we fly together higher and higher."[1]

Reik says of this day-dream: "Wir wissen dass dies die typisch ambivalente seelische Einstellung zum Vater ist. Dem Unbewussten des Kindes gehen Vater, Lehrer, Kaiser, Gott."[2]

In this day dream he works out all his contradictory feelings about his father. Hate in the vengeance he takes upon St. Jerome; reverence tinged with doubt in his meditations upon God; and desire to be appreciated by this same father in the interview with the Czar.

"Der Todeswunsch gegen Jerome richtet sich auch gleicshzeitig gegen den Vater, denn der Lehrer stellt ja eigentlich nur dass Ersatz des gehassten und Zugleich geliebten Vaters vor . . . .(und) wir wissen dass auch Gott in diesem Tagtraum die ehrwurdige Figur des Vaters vertritt."[3]

Then comes the strongest wish of all - the dream of flying to heaven with his mother, which, according to psycho-analysis, hides a sexual wish, that of being loved by the mother. And so, in this dream he fulfills his two strongest wishes - to revenge himself upon, and conquer his father - and to be loved by his mother.[4]

2. T. Reik: "Von der Kinderseele." Imago 1913, pp. 92-3. "We know that this represents the typical ambivalent mental relationship to the father. In the unconscious of the child, goes Father, teacher, Emperor, God."

3. Ibid. "The death wish against Jerome is directed equally against the father, for the teacher stands for the father who is both loved and hated, and we know also that in this day dream God represents the father.

4. Ibid.

1. L. Tolstoy: "Childhood". p. 203-4

Whether or not one accepts this strictly Freudian interpretation, it is illuminating in suggesting a possible cause for Tolstoy's later doubt of God and religious skepticism in the early doubt of his father.

Also his dream of being loved by his mother expressed a real need in the child's life, for he was a most affectionate boy - overflowing with love for all and intensely responsive to the least show of affection. The memory of his mother was often with him and he loved to dwell on it. Although he could recall her exact appearance, certain features stood out in his mind - her brown eyes, and a birthmark, and above all, her smile, which seemed to make all around more beautiful. And he wrote: "If in the heavy moments of my life, I had been able to see that smile, even in passing, I should not have known what grief is." [1.]

The mother substitute to whom he could express his affection was "Aunty Tatiana", who had loved his father, but sacrificed her love that he might better his fortunes by a marriage of convenience. She remained to live in the household, being a distant cousin and poor - and took care of the children when their own mother died.

Tolstoy loved her dearly, and spoke of her: "I remember once, when I was about five, how I squeezed in behind her on the sofa in the drawing room and she caressingly touched me with her hand. I caught it, and began to kiss it, and cry with tender love of her." [2.]

This responsiveness to and need of affection were very fundamental in his nature, and it was extended beyond his family to his little playmates and he describes his falling in love with a little girl in the following

1. L. Tolstoy. "Childhood," pp 9-10
2. A. Nazaroff: Tolstoy. The Inconstant Genius," p.26

words to his brother:

"Oh Volodya! You can't imagine what is going on in me.....and do you know? When I lie and think of her, I feel sad, God knows why, and I want to cry awfully." "I wish only for one thing," continued I, "and that is always to be with her, and always to see her, and nothing else."[1]

1. L. Tolstoy: "Childhood," p.108

This lovable though erratic child grew into a rather awkward, ugly youth. We see him at sixteen, living at his aunt's house in Kazan where he attended the University there - embarked upon the career of a grown man. He is described as being at this time pompous, vain, arrogant and snobbish - beneath which exterior he suffered the pangs of sensitive adolescence, and covered up his timidity and lack of assurance by putting on all possible airs and manners. His greatest longing was to reign in society and to be the central figure in his world. And yet he comported himself so awkwardly and committed such blunders that he suffered agonies of shame and embarrassment. Also, his outward appearance was a great grief to him, and he tells us he would have given anything in the world for a handsome face.[1]

"I thought," he wrote, "that no human being with such a large nose, such thick lips, and such small grey eyes as mine could ever hope to attain happiness on this earth."[2] . . . . "I could not even console myself with the usual consolations in such circumstances. I could not say that I had an expressive, intelligent or noble countenance."[3]

Since he could not gain distinction through a beautiful face, he turned his attention to the cultivation of a beautiful soul as a means of compensation.

1. A. Nazaroff: "Tolstoy, The Inconstant Genius," pp. 14-15
2. " " " " " " p. 19
3. L. Tolstoy,: "Youth," p. 254.

In"Youth" he wrote of how he enjoyed the sensation of contrition: ".... and I was thinking now of how the father confessor must be reflecting that he had never, in all his life, met, nor ever should meet, such a beautiful soul in a young man such as I was, and even there could not be the like of me."[1]

Just as in childhood, he showed a tremendous appetite for life--nothing was half way--and the usual phenomena of adolescence were characterized in him by exceptional acuteness. The most beautiful of women, the gratitude of the world---everything would be his---a combination of virtues and self-sacrifices with wicked delights as well.[2]

He was never free from introspection and self-analysis. Among other things, he kept a note book in which he jotted down sentences which might help him to social poise:

"More dignity: to speak loudly and more distinctly, and to continue, even in spite of embarrassment, the conversation which has been begun;..."[3] After which he would again repeat the same blunders as before, and experience again the same mental anguish. And in order to gain the attention of others, he would tell the most improbable lies about where he had been, or whom he had seen: " I am absolutely unable to account for it....but in that first period of my youth, I was frequently attacked by the strange desire to tell the most desperate lies without any apparent cause whatever....it seems to me that the chief cause of this strange tendency lay in the vain desire to show myself as a different man from what I was..."[4]

1. L. Tolstoy: " Youth," p. 277.
2. A. Nazaroff: "Tolstoy. The Inconstant Genius," p. 19.
3. Ibid., p.21.
4. L. Tolstoy: " Youth," p. 363.

With characteristic inconstancy, he devoted himself quite sincerely now to being a man "comme-il-faut" - now to being a great philosopher, and at one time for a week he wore a long gray cloak with an image of Rousseau next to his heart. This episode recalls his earlier interest in the philosophies when for a period he determined to be an Epicurean and gave up his studies, lying on his bed all day long eating honey cakes - while at another he became an ascetic and punished himself by flagellations and self-denials.

One thing stands out as particularly significant in this welter of youthful longings and strivings, and that is his intense consciousness of his own individuality which was developed to a morbid degree. We know that self-feeling, introspection, lack of assurance and a general instability are characteristic of all normal adolescents,[1] but I think it is fairly obvious that Tolstoy was more intensely self-absorbed and more sensitive than is usual. That egoism or self-consciousness, which has been called by some the mainspring of his life and activities, is nowhere more clearly demonstrated than in this period.

Along with this, is the love of life, which filled him as a child, and which he could never quite quell, even in his old age, and which, all his life he fought with his moralistic tendency.

He felt a particularly keen response to the beauties of Nature, and he writes of his sense of absorption in her, and of how he sometimes would arise early and go for a walk in the birch forest near the house, and of the "surface of the river which was violet in the shade, and began to ripple in the morning

1. G. Stanley Hall: "Adolescence."

breeze....the field of yellowing rye....and I enjoyed the consciousness of just such a fresh young power of life as Nature was breathing all around me."[1.]

N. Ossipow interprets this period of Tolstoy's life in a more specialized way,- especially with reference to his sex instinct.[2.]

In "Boyhood," Tolstoy described the conflict of a fourteen year old boy between sexual desire for the chambermaid and "Schamhaftigkeit" - or morality.

"Not one of the changes which had taken place in my view of things was so striking, so far as I myself was concerned, as the one by which I ceased to see in one of our chambermaids merely a female servant, and began to see, instead, a woman, on whom, in a certain degree, my peace and happiness might depend."[3.]

"She was very pretty, but I am afraid to describe her, lest my imagination should reproduce the enchanting and deceptive image which formed itself during my passion. Not to make any mistake, I shall only say that she was uncommonly white, voluptuously developed, and a woman, and I was fourteen years old."

Having surprised his brother in the act of kissing the girl - he thenceforward spent hours at a time listening, full of envy and jealousy, behind the door - and longing more than anything else to imitate his brother, but unable to do so, deterred partly because he felt himself too unattractive, and because of a certain bashfulness,- and so tried to despise the pleasures which might have resulted from a handsome face, and took refuge in proud loneliness.

Ossipow says that besides the sex and moral drive we must consider the ego drive, and these three elements were at war in the boy's nature. The

1. L. Tolstoy: "Youth," p. 253 [illegible]
2. N. Ossipow: "Über Leo Tolstois Seelenleiden," in Imago 1913.
3. L. Tolstoy: "Boyhood.," p.167.

problem of the plurality of being is expressed in the words, "Ich will, aber es will in mir micht."[1] The ego and the sex drive fought against the moral. The moral remained victorious,- and Tolstoy sought consolation in proud loneliness. This moral victory was helped out to a very great extent by his obsession regarding his ugliness. In writing of this episode, Tolstoy himself said, "I am convinced that nothing has such a telling influence upon the direction of a man's life as his looks, and not so much his looks as his conviction of their attractiveness or unattractiveness."[2] But this victory was also helped by the fact that in Tolstoy the sex drive was divided, and a large part turned upon himself, because he was a Narcissist as his many letters, memoirs, and novels testify.[3] "Die Scham, die Zwangsidee der Unschönheit seines Äussern, und der Narzissimus haben die Heterolibido auf ihrem Wege gehindert."[4]

"It is normal," writes Ossipow, "to achieve a synthesis of such mental conflicts, by means of the ego drive and it is pathologic if achieved by any other means."[5]

The nature of Tolstoy's synthesis of his conflict at that time, together with this morbid shyness, and extreme instability, indicate that at the beginning of adolescence he tended towards a definite neurosis. More normal activities asserted themselves to create normal syntheses at later periods, alternating with others of a pathologic nature until his final greatest conflict.

1. "I wish to do so, but something with me is not willing."
2. L. Tolstoy; "Boyhood", p. 168
3. N. Ossipow: "Über Leo Tolstois Seelenleiden" in Imago 1913, p.496
4. "Bashfulness, the dominant idea of the ugliness of his appearance, and Narcissiam hindered the development of the Heterolibido.
5. N. Ossipow: "Über Leo Tolstois Seelenleiden" in Imago 1913, p.497.

Tolstoy spent three years at the University of Kazan,- during which time he changed his course, owing to failure in the examinations, for which he had not studied, deeming it not quite the thing for a Count Tolstoy to study with too much zeal. At the end of three years, he became dissatisfied with his university career, and came to the sudden decision to leave and settle at Yassnaya Polyana where he could make himself over into the man he would like to be--and in seclusion from the world, to educate himself in all branches of knowledge, and devote his life to the education of his serfs, and in bettering their condition. His mind was filled by pleasant dreams of his sacrifice, rewarded by their gratitude.[1]

This was Tolstoy's first practical attempt to solve the problem of how to live the best kind of life. Just as in his later life, he turned to peasants, and attempted to live by the ideals of self-sacrifice. But it is noteworthy that at this periond when he was young and strong with all his instincts clamoring for the pleasures of life, his program of virtue could not long satisfy him. Also the peasants met all his efforts for their betterment with a kind of deadly passive resistance.

Wounded by their ingratitude, and deciding that virtue was not what he had dreamed, he left all this behind him, and settled in St. Petersburg and Moscow where he plunged into the kaleidoscopic whirl of society. Then he joined the army, becoming a Junker in the artillery at the Caucasus.

Here again he made an attempt to start life anew and bury himself in the natural life. He revelled in the sights and sounds of nature, but no sooner

1. A. Nazaroff: " Tolstoy. The Inconstant Genius," p.25

did he become contented and at peace with himself, than the ceaseless and tormenting questions arose in his mind. He saw how the Cossacks lived a free and beautiful life; he longed to be like them,- yet he could not bring himself to accept life so simply. He sought to achieve a oneness with Nature in falling in love with a beautiful Cossack girl - the Maryanka of his novel "The Cossacks." But he could not love her simply and primitively as she was ready to love; he had to love her as a personification of the beauties of nature, and to build up a sentimental picture to justify to himself the real nature of his feeling for her. But she would have none of him, and told him so. "Get away. I'm sick of you!" And so his second attempt at gaining an inner unity failed as completely as the first.

From the Caucasus he was transferred to the Crimea, where he distinguished himself in battle. But his writings had already begun to attract attention,[1] and the Czar considered him too valuable a man to be lost to the country, and accordingly ordered him sent to a safe place. After peace was made he settled once more in St. Petersburg, where for the next ten years he continued the gay life of the chief literary circle, which welcomed him warmly to its midst. He wrote little in this time, but traveled in Germany, France and Italy, and still occupied himself to considerable extent with the education of his serfs.

All during this time, he tells us in his "Confession" he was tormented by the question of how to live better. He felt that he must live for the progress which he,-not unnaturally, being greatly flattered by society,- felt

1. His first novel, "Childhood" was published about that time.

that he represented. And yet, the life of the world seemed not to have satisfied him wholly, no more than did the exclusively virtuous life which he had led on his estate. Later on he wrote of all this period before his marriage.

"Ambition, love of power, love of gain, lechery, pride, anger, vengeance, were held in high esteem. As I gave way to these passions, I became like my elders and I felt that they were satisfied with me....lying, robbery, adultery of all kinds, drunkenness, violence, murder - there was not one crime I did not commit, and yet I was not the less considered by my equals a comparatively moral man."[1]

Allowing for the exaggeration common in Confessions, it is true, however, that Tolstoy led a life in which wine and women figured prominently. Always susceptible to the attraction of women, nevertheless he was tortured by his lapses from virtue and again and again he would make a rule to abstain from women, only to yield to some temptation and to feel again self-disgust and remorse. The conflict which had begun when he first felt attracted to the chambermaid, went on unceasingly, but he never really resolved it, for his instincts were so strong that he had to yield; but his moral nature was also strong and would give him no peace.

At this time he settled again in the country, with an interim abroad, and continued to busy himself with educating the serfs.

1. L. Tolstoy. "My Confession", p.5-6

"Things seemed to be going on well, but I felt that my mind was not in a normal state, and that a change was near....(I) got so involved that I was harrassed to death; my activity in the schools was so dubious to me... consisting as it did in forever the same thing,- in the desire to teach all people, and to hide the fact that I did not know how or what to teach,- that I fell ill, more with a mental than a physical sickness, gave up everything, and started for the steppes to the Bashkirs to breathe fresher air, to drink kumiss and live an animal life."[1] Perhaps, as he said, he would have come to that state of despair which he reached fifteen years later, but after he returned, he married, and family happiness saved him for the time being.[2]

Tolstoy's childhood, youth and early manhood, demonstrate quite clearly certain facts which it is necessary to keep in mind when considering the problem of his personality: first that he was endowed with a nervous constitution so highly sensitized that he was bound to react much more intensely to his life's experiences than a more phlegmatic type of individual would do; and there may have been a pathologic basis for his periods of melancholia, in his nervous constitution being not perfectly healthy.

Secondly, his early experience with death, which identified it with physical life, so conditioned him that never in all his life was he able to free himself from the fear of it.

Thirdly, he bore the burden of divided consciousness even as a little child, and never from the time he was five years old was he able to attain to unity.

Fourthly, we saw how certain factors in his environment brought before

1. L. Tolstoy, "My Confession," p.11
2. Ibid.

him the ideals which he later was to hold before the world; i.e., the example of disinterested service and love of quiet contemplation in the person of his adopted aunt, and the ascetic ideal as an end worth while in itself, as seen by the Holy Fools.

Fifthly, the result of his childish emotions regarding his father and mother suggest that doubt of his father may have led to doubt of God, and that his love for his mother associated with her in his mind, the simplicity and peace of earliest childhood, so that in after life, his return to the simple life of the peasant was in reality a return to his mother.[1]

And lastly, in adolescence, we saw the evidences of a morbid self-consciousness, which caused him to be so obsessed by a sense of his personal ugliness and deficiencies that he was impelled to compensate by attempting to excel in every other way possible.

1. In accordance with the interpretation of the psychology of Jung.

When Tolstoy returned from the Bashkir he married Sophie Behrs, a girl of eighteen, with whom he was ardently in love, and who returned his love just as ardently. For the next fifteen years, married life absorbed and gave outlet to his energies,- not quite completely, as we shall see,- but to such an extent, that he was almost able to forget his moral torment.

There are many instances left us in records of his life, of his gaiety, high spirits and love of life which showed itself in jest and games and eager interest in all that went on. For awhile was uppermost this happy, spontaneous side of his nature which recalls the little child who used to rush around with overflowing spirits and the most happy and astonished expression, as if he had just discovered some wonderful secret. He had developed from the awkward, unattractive youth into a man, not handsome, but of forceful and striking appearance. Descriptions of him lay great stress upon the power of his personality, and especially of the power of his eyes, which seemed to concentrate upon and appraise the soul of whomever he looked at.

His son writes in his memoirs of his father, how, although the children could lie to their mother, they never could to their father, because when he looked at them, they knew that it was impossible to hide anything from him.[1]

During these years, however, his inner conflict, although repressed by the outward activity of his life, found an outlet in his writings.

He drew from his own life the material for his novels, and in them we can find not only the delight of physical life, in the description of which he was unsurpassed,- but also his own moral questionings which he projected into his books.

In "War and Peace," the two characters, Pierre and Prince Andrew, represent

1. I. Tolstoy. "Memoirs of Tolstoy," p.10-11

the two sides of Tolstoy's nature. Of course, neither character is exclusively one side of Tolstoy, but in Pierre the physical man predominates, and in Prince Andrew it is the intellectual and moralistic. Pierre joined a brotherhood, in which he thought to find the meaning of life. There he enjoyed lofty sensations for a while but it was not long before he lapsed from the rule of life enjoined by this society. Then from a sentimental solution, he turns to the more practical one of war and there the example of a peasant convinced him that he no longer needed to seek an answer to life's problem, for God is everywhere. And so he no longer was troubled by the question, because he ceased to ask it. Then his second marriage set the seal of domesticity upon him and his only manifestation of unrest is his joining a secret society seeking to Christianize Russia. Like Tolstoy he solved his problem in a physical way (for to both marriage was a purely physical thing justifiable only because of its issue).[1]

Prince Andrew is cynical, proud and disillusioned; he solves the problem by death and in that surrenders to an infinite calm, but this was because, wounded and dying he no longer has the strength to care very much about anything, and so it is not really a true solution at all.

In "Anna Karenina" the troublous questions are being asked more insistently. In Levin we see even more plainly, the characteristics of Tolstoy. Introspective and self-absorbed, like Tolstoy, he longs to escape from the bonds of his inner life into a free and natural existence. He marries a young girl, Kitty, - and

1. H. L. Fausset,: "Tolstoy The Inner Drama." "But then as now these discussions, and questions of that kind which are similar to the question how to obtain the greatest amount of gratification from one's dinner did not and do not exist for those who see the purpose of dinner in the nourishment it gives, and the purpose of marriage in the family." p.129.

for a short time experiences much happiness, but he feels that there is something more to life than meets the eye, which he must find out about. Levin's wife, Kitty, like Tolstoy's wife, found the meaning of life in the actual living and doing. Levin feels this is the best way, but he cannot be like that himself. "Without knowing who I am and why I am here, life is impossible. And I cannot know it, consequently I cannot live, he would say to himself.....and though in good health and happily married, Levin was several times so near to killing himself that he had to hide a rope so as not to hang himself, and would not go out with a gun for fear of shooting himself."[1] And this was the very thing which Tolstoy himself did later.

Then Levin decides that reason is evil and instinct virtuous, and that if he can understand with his heart it is not necessary to do so with the mind, and that from now on his life can never be as meaningless as he had thought.

In these two masterpieces, Tolstoy expressed his own mental struggles, which had not really been harmonized by his marriage, and which in his novels he can only solve by processes of rationalization.

At last Tolstoy came to the point where he could no longer repress or evade the issue. Up until then he had been so absorbed in physical activity that he could put away the problem of life, and since there was always more ahead, it was natural to think "not now, later" - and to feel fairly cheerfully about life, as long as there was still further development possible. But now he had reached the zenith of physical development, and the first years of physical decay began to set in.

1. L. Tolstoy: "Anna Karenina", p.366-7

" I felt that I was not developing, but fading, my muscles were weakening, my teeth falling out."[1]

This tragic period of Tolstoy's life which followed, when, groping about in the dark for an answer to the same old question, "Why?," he suffered literally the tortunes of the damned, was the culmination of all his former crises and periods of stress. All his life long he had sought to unite the two warring elements within,--now by seeking self-abandonment in physical life, now by attempting moral regeneration,--but the consciousness of self was too strong to allow him the forgetfulness he craved. The sufferings he experienced are described in " My Confession," and his own words will speak for themselves:

"Thus I lived; but five years ago, a strange state of mind began to grow upon me: I had moments of perplexity, of a stoppage as it were, of life, as if I did not know how I was to live, what I was to do, and I began to wonder, and was a victim of low spirits. But this passed, and I continued to live as before. Later, these periods of perplexity beganto return more and more frequently, and invariably took the same form. These stoppages of life always presented themselves to me with the same questions: 'Why?' and 'What after?'"[2] My life had come to a stop. I was able to breathe, to eat , to drink, to sleep, and I could not help breathing, eating, drinking, sleeping; but there was no real life in me because I had not a single desire the fulfillment of which I could feel to be reasonalbe. If I wished for anything, I knew beforehand that, were I to satisfy the wish,or were I not to satisfy it,nothing would come of

1. A. Nazaroff: "Tolstoy. The Inconstant Genius," p.225
2. L. Tolstoy: " My Confession," p.12

it....the truth was, that life was meaningless. Every day of life, every step in it, brought me, as it were, nearer the precipice, and I saw clearly that before me there was nothing but ruin. And to stop was impossible; and it was impossible to shut my eyes so as not to see that there was nothing before me but suffering and actual death, absolute annihilation."

"Illness and death would come, if not today, then tomorrow, to those I loved, to myself, and nothing remains but stench and worms. All my acts, whatever I did, would sooner or later be forgotten, and I myself be nowhere. Why, then busy oneself with anything? How could men fail to see this and live?....It is possible to live only as long as life intoxicates us; as soon as we are sober again, we see that it is all a delusion, and a stupid delusion!"[1]

"There is an old Eastern fable about a traveller in the steppes who is attacked by a furious wild beast. To save himself the traveller gets into a waterless well,- but at the bottom of it he sees a dragon with its jaws wide open to devour him. The unhappy man dares not get out for fear of the dragon, so he catches hold of the branch of a wild plant growing in a crevice of the well. His arms grow tired, and he feels that he must soon perish, death awaiting him on either side, but he still holds on, and he sees two mice, one black and one white, gradually making their way round the stem of the wild plant on which he is hanging, nibbling it through. The plant will soon give way and break off, and he will fall into the jaws of the dragon. The traveller sees this and knows that he must inevitably perish; but, while still hanging, he looks around him, and finding some drops of honey on the leaves of the wild plant, he stretches out his tongue and licks them."[2]

"Thus do I cling to the branch of life, knowing that the dragon of

1. L. Tolstoy: "My Confession", p.14
2. Ibid., p. 16.

death inevitably awaits me, ready to tear me to pieces....I should strive to suck the honey which once comforted me, but this honey no longer rejoices me...I see the dragon from which there is no escape, and the mice, and I cannot turn my eyes away from them. It is no fable, but a living, undeniable truth, to be understood of all men."

";...The two drops of honey, which more than anything else drew my eyes away from the cruel truth, my love for my family and for my writings...were no longer sweet to me."[1]

"It was this that was terrible! And to get free from this horror I was ready to kill myself...The horror of the darkness was too great to bear, and I longed to free myself from it, as speedily as possible...This was the feeling that, above all, drew me to think of suicide."[2]

In "Varieties of Religious Experience", William James cites Tolstoy's mental sufferings at this time, as a well marked case of anhedonia, or passive loss of appetite for all life's values, a state of mind which has been experineced by others, sometimes as the result of some physical disease, or, more often, occurring in people of the temperament characterized by James as the "sick souls"[3]

The value of life in the individual's eyes is dependent upon the emotional attitude of the individual regarding it, as we know that the same fact inspires utterly different reactions in different people. To Tolstoy the world suddenly became flat and stale, and the whole panorama of life a ghastly mockery. There was no longer any zest; it was as if there was only a horrible emptiness.

"The practically real world for each one of us, the

effective world of

1. L. Tolstoy: "My Confession," p.19
2. Ibid.
3. See page 9.

the individual is the compound world, the physical fact and emotional values in indistinguishable combination. Withdraw or pervert either factor of this complex resultant, and the kind of experience we call pathological ensues."[1]

When normal balance is upset in this way, inner unity may be achieved once more, (although sometimes it is never regained) either quite suddenly and unexpectedly, or by a gradual process of readjustment.

The terrible plight in which Tolstoy found himself stimulated his intellect to seek an answer to the problem. His philosophy was the answer,- as psychologically, all philosophizing is the attempt on the part of the individual to orient himself in the realms of experience, and to make some order out of chaos, so that he may find a working hypothesis of life.

We have seen how, all his life, Tolstoy was the victim of inner discord, and how he tried to resolve it, by absorption in physical life, in which, however, he could not find lasting satisfaction. His first conscious attempt at such a solution was when he left the university to settle on his estates and better the condition of his serfs. Their resistance to his efforts, and his own love of life drew him once more into the world. Again, in the Caucasus he sought unity with Nature in loving a primitive Cossack girl, who rejected his advances because he insisted on mixing love with moralizing and high sentiments, so he once more devoted himself to a life of pleasure and gaiety, interspersed with attempts to educate the peasants. But a period of depression and melancholy sent him to the Bashkir to restore his nerves in an

1. W. James: "Varieties of Religious Experience," p.

animal life, and when he came back from there he married. We saw how in the first fifteen years, the activities of his married life absorbed him and the only signs of his mental conflict are to be found in his novels, into which he projected the problems which had harrassed him. And finally, at the summit of his career, life suddenly seemed to stop for him, and he could no longer evade nor deny the problem, and he set out to find an answer which could give himpeace.

In his search after Truth, Tolstoy turned first to the orthodox church, although he had been an unbeliever practically from his childhood. He did this because he hoped to find the knowledge of good and evil in Christianity.[1] But the Church offered him only certain rules combined with what seemed to him an indeterminate spiritual tendency. His indictment of the Church was based on the fact that she had recognized and sanctioned divorce, slavery, earthly powers, the death penalty and war,and that although confessing the doctrine of Jesus in theory, denied it in practice.

So he denied the Church and turned to a study of the life and teachings of Jesus, upon which he based his working ethical philosophy.

The teachings of Jesus which Tolstoy taught as the necessary rule of life may be summed up under a few heads as follows:

(1) Resist not evil lest the evil rebound upon yourself.

(2) A true Christian cannot claim any rights of property.

(3) Be not angry and do not consider yourself as better than others; if you are angry and offended others, so much the worse for you.

(4) Avoid libertinism, and to that end choose one woman and remain faithful to her.

(5) Do not bind yourself by oaths or promises to the service of

1. L. Tolstoy: "My Religion", p.80

those who may constrain you to commit acts of folly, or wickedness.

"Now.....I cannot as I once did, recognize in myself or others, titles or ranks or qualities aside from the quality of manhood. I can no longer seek for fame and glory: I can no longer cultivate a system of instruction which separates me from men. I cannot in my surroundings, my food, my clothing, my manners, strive for what not only separates me from others, but renders me a reproach to the majority of mankind."[1]

Tolstoy was also deeply concerned with every particular problem of human life, and with all the fields of human activity.

Regarding governments, he wrote:

"I regard not only the Russian government but all governments as ... institutions sanctioned by tradition...for the purpose of committing by violence...the most dreadful crimes of murder, robbery.....exploitation of the people by the wealthy and powerful...."[2]

He says that in order not to do the evil which produces misery for all there are three things to be abstained from:

(1) The taking part in any governmental activity.

(2) The payment of taxes.

(3) The appeal to governmental institutions for the protection of his own possessions.

Governments cannot be abolished by force, but only through abolishing

1. L. Tolstoy: "My Religion", p. 268
2. "Crisis in Russia" London Times 3/11/05

whatever makes violence possible.

He was also most vitally concerned with the poverty of the people, and the problems of the working classes. The answer was clear and simple to him: private ownership of land is an evil and injustice, and only by accepting the undeniable truth that the land cannot be the exclusive property of some, and that the non-admission to the land of those who are in need of it is a sin, then only can injustice be done away with...."all members of a community could live on the land and make a living from it, and all land should pass into the hands, or remain with those who loved to work on it, and made it produce the most."[1]

In all these spheres of life, Tolstoy emphasizes the giving up of individual desires; to give up seeking our own happiness as animals is the true law of life. By struggle against this law suffering is only intensified, for the individual in seeking selfish happiness, sees that others are engaged in the same pursuit; he is indifferent to their joys or sorrows and they to his. Egoism is the law, but in seeking selfish gains, he longs to make sure they will last, and he sees that illness and death may snatch them from him at any moment. So, only by comprehending that there can be no happiness for the animal person, that only when we ask nothing but to serve others, then will life begin to have a true sweetness and meaning, and love of others will give satisfaction where love of self gives only disappointment.

1. B. Hall :"What Tolstoy Taught",p.44

By living not for oneself but for others, one becomes decrystallized in mankind, and mankind lives on although the individual man dies. There will be no individual immortality in the usual sense taught by the Church - but rather will man's spirit be found with God who is Life and Love.

Tolstoy spent six years immersed in painful preoccupation with theological problems, during which time his wife, unable to understand his strange joyless moods, could only hope and pray that it would pass away in time as any illness would do.

But it did not pass. With his usual intensity, he rushed headlong into the task of converting the world, and especially to revolutionize his own life, by dividing his estate among the poor and by becoming a wandering beggar, to set before the world the example of the Christian life as he conceived it. But to his grief and disappointment he was met by opposition or indifference on the part of his friends and even his own family.

His wife with the responsibilities of nine children, did not feel that she could follow out the practical applications of his teachings, and he became embittered and out of touch with the family he had loved so dearly.

Although hampered by his family ties from practising wholly as he preached, nevertheless Tolstoy simplified his life by doing away with all his own personal luxuries, by adopting peasant's dress and learning the trade of shoe-making, at which he worked when not engaged in writing, or ploughing the fields.

Tolstoy's philosophy is one of renunciation, and involves the whole question of the ascetic ideal.

Asceticism may be defined as the voluntary practice of suffering, toil, or renunciation for the purpose of securing the favor of the deity, or of stimulating moral development.

In the Western world, the ascetic principle that a man must renounce in order to gain, is a principle of life with universal application along all lines. But this conception, which among the Greeks, with whom the word[1] originated, implied merely legitimate control or moderation, has become exaggerated and perverted (especially when it met and was influenced by the Oriental conception of matter as inherently evil) into such extreme forms as monasticism,and hermit and beggar brotherhoods who indulge in the severest forms of self-mutilation.

But it is with the psychological, rather than the philosophical or historical aspects of asceticism, with which we are concerned here.

1. Askesis.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF RENUNCIATION

Psychologically, asceticism is often a reaction from excessive self-indulgence, and we often see people who in their youth were very wild, becoming ascetics in older life, having the desire to appease a bad conscience.

It may also be an expression of organic hardihood, disgusted with too much ease, or the desire to test physical strength or nerve, to be sure it is not missing, and so today we have in America endurance contests of all kinds, where one person proves to himself and the world, that he can walk, dance, or run longer than any one else, or eat more.

Without doubt, Tolstoy's asceticism was in part the result of a reaction, against the follies of his youth.

He tells us in "My Confession" that he was wild and dissipated, and there was a basis in fact for his self-accusations. Indeed, his great emphasis on chastity and monogamy in marriage, was in reality a protest against his own physical enslavement by women. He could not have so hated his impulses and desires had they not dominated him to such a degree that he was afraid of losing himself completely. At twenty, he wrote in his Diary:

"Regard feminine society as an inevitable evil of social life, and in so far as you can, avoid it. From whom indeed, do we learn voluptuousness, effeminacy, frivolity in everything, and many another

vice if not from women?"[1] Tolstoy could learn nothing else, for his physical response to them was so engrossing that it excluded all other things. And he was so morbidly conscious of them that he could write in a letter:

"In modern times they appear to be possessed of devils, and career around like cats on a roof."[2]

His novels betray his preoccupation with and dread of lust. His study of the evils of marriage in "The Kreutzer Sonata" express this. He cannot conceive of marriage as a human and spiritual relationship , but only as a physical thing,- and his opinion of what love really is, is expressed in the words of Pozdnaef in "The Kreutzer Sonata."

"Every man experiences what you call love for every pretty woman."[3]

In fact, Tolstoy was a sensualist in everything. Music affected him to the point of tears, and he said of it:

"Music is a sensual pleasure of hearing just as taste is a sensual pleasure--there is no moral sense in it."[4]

And because of this he feared and hated the powerful effect it had upon him.

"Music in general is a terrible thing....it acts, it acts terribly,--I am speaking for myself,--but not at all by elevating."[5]

1. L. Tolstoy: " Journal", p.18
2. H. Fausset: "Tolstoy. The Inner Drama," p.96
3. L. Tolstoy: " The Kreutzer Sonata", p. 316
4. H. Fausset: " Tolstoy, The Inner Drama," p.90
5. L.Tolstoy: "The Kreutzer Sonata,"p.390

Also was his awareness of Nature intensely physical and his writings abound in descriptions of Nature, so vivid that one can see and feel it almost as he did. In "Katia" he describes the beauty and charm of spring:

"Upon all sides arose the penetrating night perfume of flowers, the turf was drenched with heavy dew, the nightingales in a lilac bush near us was executing his roulades . . . . the starry sky seemed to stoop close above our heads."[1.]

Indeed it was in the delineation of the physical qualities of his characters that Tolstoy was supreme as an artist; it is i the smile of Anna, the lithe movements of Natasha, Vronsky's white teeth, and the burning eyes of Pozdnyneuf which remain in our memory, rather than the spiritual or moral qualities which also pertain to these people.

Also, since the physical and the mental are never entirely separated, we cannot ignore the fact that Tolstoy had reached the height of his physical development, and after that there was nothing to look forward to but inevitable decay. In fact, his finding of his religion has been described as "physiologically a transition to old age by one who loved life too much," and the basis for his conversion to be found in the beginnings of senility. Ossip Lourie considers that his

1. L. Tolstoy: "Katia", p. 21.

earlier doubt was purely intellectual , and the normal reaction of an intelligent man to the spectacle of a world whose ends and origins are in obscurity; but that the activities of the period after his conversion were due to the organic and mental changes which take place in old age.

It is not difficult to imagine that to one so deeply rooted in physical life, nothing could seem much more horrible than the death of the body. The physical aspect of death had made so profound an impression upon him in childhood that it conditioned his response to it throughout life. It was with his feelings that he comprehended it, as may be seen in his description of an execution which he witnessed in Paris.

"When I saw the head divided from the body, and heard the sound with which they fell separately in the box, I understood, not with my reason, but with my whole being, that no theory of the wisdom of all established things, nor of progress, could justify such an act."[1] He has here so identified himself with the man who was executed, that he felt "with his whole being" what the experience was like.

And again, the physical reality so appallingly realized in "The Daath of Ivan Ilytch" :

"He was struggling in that black sack into which he was being thrust by an unseen resistless force. He struggled as a man condemned

1. L. Tolstoy: "My Confession," p.9

to death struggles in the hands of the executioner and knows that he cannot save himself."[1]

There is also a basis for asceticism in the old conception of the difference between the body and the soul. Tolstoy, in his life, might almost be taken as a symbol of the conflict between the two, since he could never find happiness in either the one or the other.

Another motive for the ascetic impulse is in ~~sadism and~~ masochism, which is a perversion of the bodily sensibility so that normally pain giving stimuli are actually felt as pleasures. Many of the saints of old actually did take pleasure in self-torture, and this masochistic impulse may be extended into the mental realm.

Freimark takes the view that there was a masochistic tendency in his emphasis on self-denial.

"In diesem Betonen der Selbstverleugnung kommt ein gewisser masochistischer Zug zum Ausdruck. Masochismus muss sich nicht immer in dem Verlangen nach misshandlung durch ein Sexualobjekt äussern; Zum masochismus muss man ebenso die Neigung rechnen sich zu demütigen Denn das unterscheidet die echte von der masochistischer Demut. Dem Masochisten ist es mit seiner Demütigung nicht ernst - sie ist ihm nur ein Vorwand, nur Mittel zum Zweck. Er erwartet von ihr und erlaugt mit ihre Hilfe Genuss, einen Genuss, der gerade in dem vorangehenden und ihn auslösenden physischen oder psychischen Schmerz seinen besonderen und für viele anziehenden Reig hat. Wie Stark bei Tolstoy dieses Moment

1. L. Tolstoy: "The Death of Ivan Ilytch", p.78

mitspricht, geht aus seiner Schilderung einer Züchtigung. Obwohl dieser heftiger Schmerz empfindet hat er doch eine angenehme moralische Empfindung .Und er bittet den Züchtgenden tränenüberströmt:

"Schlage mich stärker,dass es mehr wehtut , ich bin ein unnütiger,ein schlechter, ein unglückliches Mensch."[1]

By self-abasement, a certain pride results in the individual, and Tolstoy's pride in his own beautiful soul after his confession to the priest is an instance of this.

It is well recognized that psychologically, confession is "good for the soul"--quite apart from any moral considerations. The release which comes from casting off by this means, the weight of some oppressive idea, results in a feeling of happiness and relief. Different men, according to their various temperaments and interests gain this release in different ways,--the artist in creating a work of art, the religious man through his relationship to God, especially by means of confession. This is a perfectly natural and beneficial thing, but with Tolstoy, according to Freimark, it is exaggerated into a morbid tendency.

"Dieses natürliche und selbstverständliche mittel, sich von Seelenlasten zu befreien, wird freilich zur Pose, wenn die Selbstanklagen in die Welt hinausgeschrieen werden."[2]

1. H. Freimark: "Tolstoj als Charakter," p.10-11
"In these accents of self-denial appears a certain masochistic tone. Masochism is not necessarily desire for mistreatment from a sexual motive; one must take into account also the wish for self-humiliation, for that differentiates true from masochistic humiliation. The masochist is not honest in his self-humiliation, it is only a means to an end. He expects from it, and gains with its help an enjoyment which has an especial, and for some the greatest attraction in the accompanying psychic or physical pain. How intense this moment is with Tolstoy, appears in his description of a beating. Although he felt severe pain, he also experienced a certain moral satisfaction. And he begs the one who is punishing him, tears streaming down his cheeks, 'Strike me harder so that it will hurt me more. I am a bad, wicked, miserable wretch.'"

2. Ibid., p.18
"This natural and understandable means of freeing oneself from mental preoccupations becomes really a pose when the self-accusers go shouting about the world."

That Tolstoy's philosophy which preaches the annihilation of the ego, was in reality dictated by extreme egoism is also the opinion of Freimark.

"Und in der tat Tolstoy ist egoist durch und durch. Er kennt nur sich. Das was er seinen. Gestalten an Psychologie mitgibt, hat er stets seiner eigenen Psyche entnommen, daher haben nur die Figuren seiner Erzahlungen Lebenawahrheit, die psychologischen Hinsicht er selbst sind."[1]

1. H. Freimark,: "Tolstoy, Als Charakter", p. 13. "And in fact, Tolstoy is an egoist through and through. He knows only himself. He has always drawn upon his own self for his descriptions of psychological states, and therefore only the figures of his novels which, from a psychological standpoint, are himself true to life.

And, according to such a view, his religion and philosophy might be besides a means of saving himself, a means of extending his ego, and gaining the attention of the world,- even more completely than he had done before,- that his attitude was, in short, a part of the over-compensation begun in his youth, when the consciousness of personal ugliness drove him to try to excel in the realms of intellect and spirit.

It is undoubtedly true that Tolstoy's consciousness of self was from the very beginning abnormally acute. Since memory marks the first dawn of consciousness, we can trace the beginnings of his to infancy, for his earliest recollection is when as a baby he lay struggling in tight clothes, feeling a sense of blind, impotent rage at being bound, and realizing, too, the presence of people who were bending over him.

Since memory rarely goes further back of the first two or three years, it points to a particularly precocious development of the ego to find it connected with infancy.

Maxim Gorky , who knew Tolstoy well, describes him as the "embodiment of a fierce clutching life principle."

"His disproportionately overgrown individuality is a monstrous

phenomenon, almost ugly, and there is in him something of the Sviatogor, the bogotin whom the earth can't hold: "Yes, he is great."

"All his life he feared and hated death, all his life there throbbed in his soul the Arsamaxian tenor - "must he die?".... and his philosophy was a kind of negation of all affirmation - the deepest and most evil nihilism ever springing from an intimate and unrelieved despair - from a loneliness which none but he has experienced with a more terrifying clearness."[1]

1. M. Gorky: "Reminscences of Leo Nikolaevitch Tolstoy", p.43-4

A discussion of the value of Tolstoy's philosophy is not a part of this study, but it may be well to consider briefly the two main critical altitudes, in order to disclose the relationship between his personality and philosophy.

That he attained true spiritual values through personal regeneration is the first point of view. All men need to believe in some creed or faith by which they may live, and Tolstoy started first by belief in the ego, but, finding that in practice this led to violence and hatred, he adopted the principle of sacrifice of the ego, which led to a life of gentleness and love. In his own life he set a striking example of individual sobriety and industry to the world, and in kindness and charity he showed the practical applications of his ideal of love for others.

No one will deny his kindness to others, although we cannot forget the great unhappiness he brought to the one who was nearest him. Neither can one doubt that there was little value in the corrupt society of Russian aristocracy at that time, - and that there were many glaring social evils which needed the searchlight of truth upon them. And in his denunciation of war and ideals of internationalism, his utterances sound very much in keeping with the trend of modern thought.

But the essence of his philosophy, and the part which he attempted to practice in his own life was that all civilization was evil, and that only by living in simplicity as do the tillers of the soil can one know the meaning of life. And in this he idealized the peasant, confusing

ignorance with innocence, and ignored the fact that those who are educated and cultured have been able to serve humanity quite as well as those who work at humble tasks, and that honesty and industry are not the only qualities found among the poor, but sometimes, too, meanness and brutality.

The meaning of his philosophy becomes clearer to us when we have realized that it was essentially a personal thing, dictated by a personal need.

Weary of his inner conflict, he sought to save himself from the complex problems of mature life, and to regain peace in a stratum of life akin to the perfect innocence of childhood. He turned back, because he could not bear life, and, setting before the world the ideals of the peasant saints which he had learned in childhood, he identified himself with those whose simplicity made them the nearest approach to childhood.

In such a sense his philosophy represents an escape from reality - a regression to a plane where problems and questions are non-existent, by virtue of force of circumstances, and not a facing and mastery of the facts.

The final point for consideration is the effect of Tolstoy's philosophy on his own life. We have seen that it was essentially a personal response to a personal need, but in my opinion, this philosophy of life was inadequate to serve his need and in spite of his protestations did not really give him peace.

In the first place, he had been unprepared for the practical obstacles in the way of carrying out these ideas, in the shape of opposition on the part of his wife and family. And while they continued to live in the comfort he assailed, he was forced to look on and hear the inevitable comment on the disparity between his life and his teachings. And the fact that he himself became a vegetarian, a teetotaler, wore peasant's dress, and worked at a peasant's trade, did not justify, in his eyes, the conduct of his family. There was, on this account, much discord and unhappiness in his home life,- and it resulted finally in complete estrangement from his wife, whom he constantly felt was holding him to the physical side of life which he was trying so desperately to escape. But more than this fact alone is needed to explain the dissatisfaction of these later years.

We have seen that Tolstoy expressed himself and his ideas in his books. It is therefore natural to look for the effects of his beliefs on his inner state of mind as reflected in the things which he wrote in

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his old age. One might not unreasonably expect to find reflected in them the serenity and peace of mind which only faith and a settled belief can bring.

But what are the works of this period? "The Death of Ivan Ilytch," "The Kreutzer Sonata" and "Resurrection" stand out as the greatest masterpieces of his later years, and in nothing which he ever wrote did he express more clearly the fear of physical life than in these which he wrote after finding his religion.

In the "Death of Ivan Ilytch", he describes the death of an ordinary man,- a person who is neither very good nor very bad. The dreadful loneliness which he feels as the disease which was to kill him progresses, and finally the stark terror and struggle of death itself are pictured with an intensity and reality which only their complete realization in the mind of their creator could make possible.[1]

In "The Kreutzer Sonata" it is the hatred of physical passion which he fairly shouts forth to the world. That there is nothing in marriage but a physical bond,- and that this is in itself an evil thing is the opinion expressed in the person of Pozdnyshev - the man who killed his wife because she was unfaithful, but whom he had really killed ~~along~~ long ago with his carnal love.

So we see that he failed to escape from himself and his desires. There remained one thing left which he had not tried,- and that was the

1. See page 43.

often contemplated flight from all worldly possessions and ties, which loyalty to his family had hitherto made impossible.

And one night, he did just this, and set out again to find the light, only to meet death after a three days' illness at the railroad station of Astepevo.

A great deal has been written of this last act of Tolstoy's life,- and in it has been seen the attempt to force the world to accept his teachings by a dramatic act,- or resentment against his wife who was constantly watching and spying upon him. Probably his inner unrest was aggravated by her actions,- for her forbearance had at last given way under the fear of his making a will which would be harmful to his family.

But in view of his life-long struggle with his own nature,- the truest interpretation seems to me to be in the words of Fausset:

"His last flight was really the last flight from himself, a last attempt to realize the innocency of childhood,- to shuffle off, not merely his property and his family, but his egoism....and the peace which succeeded the long conflict was not the peace of victory, but of defeat." [1]

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1. H.Fausset: "Tolstoy. The Inner Drama," p. 165.

CONCLUSION

It is not possible to estimate the personality of any man exclusively in terms of any one drive. The multiplicity of the forces behind an individual's conduct in life becomes apparent when a detailed study of them is made.

Each school of psychology contributes to the sum of knowledge regarding personality, but it would be a mistake to look for one cause alone in attempting to explain the individual.

It has been my attempt throughout this study to suggest the many influences in the shape of physical make up, environment, and inward reactions, which helped to mould the personality of Tolstoy.

We say that as a mature man he went through a period of severe mental conflict. This was no sudden phenomenon but had been led up to by many minor crises, for throughout life Tolstoy was involved in a ceaseless conflict between his physical and moral selves, which conflict had its roots in early childhood, when he was already conscious of a lost innocence which he strove in vain all his life to reoapture. At middle age this conflict became so violent that it could be repressed or evaded no longer, and it resulted in a morbid state of melancholia in which all life became temporarily devoid of meaning to him.

His attempt to find a meaning for life that would override his fear of death led to the formation of the philosophy in which he tried to quell his instincts once and for all by denying them.

In this Tolstoy tried to solve the problem by evasion, and his method of attempting to secure inner unity was a negative one. That this did not bring him complete harmony is testified to by the novels of that period, and by his final flight.

In leaving his home and family for the last time, he sought to test out his principle of life and it may be that in the life of a poor and wandering preacher, he would have found peace which nothing else had given him; but this question will remain unanswered since his final experiment was cut short by death.

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